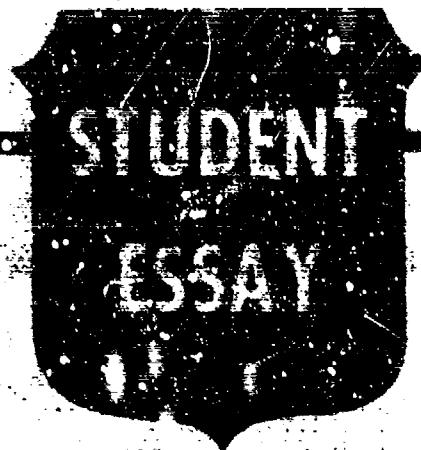


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A STUDY OF INTENT

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL LEROY R. GOFF III

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A STUDY OF INTENT

An Individual Essay

by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Leroy R. Goff, III, LTC, ARMOR

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One of the most critical elements of an operations order is commander's intent. Today the Army is emphasizing the detail associated with intent but, unfortunately, most of the discussion and instruction is taking place at the tactical level of war. Our future leaders are not receiving instruction on how to express intent at either the operational or strategic levels of war. In this paper I have done a comprehensive study of selected campaigns of Napoleon, Grant, and Ridgeway. The purpose of the study is to point out the differences in intent at all levels of war, regardless of the technology available. The essay concludes with some hints on how to relate ideas to subordinates properly, as well as some ideas on how to give better instruction on formulation and communication of intent in the Army's formal education system and in professional development programs.

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How important is commander's intent? Where should it be included in an operations order? Who should write it, or at a minimum, communicate it to subordinate commanders? How can a senior commander be assured that all of his subordinates understand his intent? How precise should the detail of the intent be? Should the amount of detail vary depending upon the level of command to which the order is directed?

All of us can relate somewhat to the questions I have put forward, but probably not many of us have spent much time thinking about the answers to them, or considering them at all, above the tactical level of war. I think that when you look at them at the operational and strategic levels you will be surprised at how different intent may have to be, if not in definition, at least in scope.

Consider then an example from OPERATION OVERLORD, which spans all three levels, simply to illustrate what I am attempting to point out in my questions. In Normandy, on D-Day, one of the decisive bridge heads across the Merderet River, by which the American forces would move westward to cut off the Cotentin Peninsula and seal the fate of Cherbourg, was held on four separate occasions by small groups of American forces which let it slip from their grasp. In two instances, these forces marched away from the bridgehead to seek some lesser objective, leaving the bridge uncovered. In consequence, the progress of the Corps was stalled for four days at the river crossing and victory was finally made certain only after a bitter struggle and heavy

losses. By their own testimony, the forces admitted that they had not taken away from their battle orders briefings a conviction that above all else, they should make certain of the continued defense of the crossing points.¹ It should be clear to everyone that we cover the spectrum of levels of war in this example. It is not necessary to scrutinize the order the leaders received to see how this task was covered in the senior commander's intent. Regardless of the depth of coverage, the subordinate commanders did not understand it as an extremely important mission, the accomplishment of which was critical to the success of the entire operation. They did not understand how their superior visioned the battle unfolding. They did not see the need of that particular bridge to cross follow-on forces. The cost of this misunderstanding is obvious in both time and soldiers lives. Proper technique could have precluded this from ever happening.

This brief example demonstrates the need to understand the answers to the questions posed at the beginning of the essay. The ability to articulate intent is imperative to commanders at all levels, strategic, operational, and tactical. If we as senior commanders do not teach it, we are not properly training our subordinates. We must provide the tools for them to execute properly the missions which we assign them to accomplish.

The study of commander's intent is not new. In On War, written by Clausewitz between 1816 and 1830, he says, "If he

who should be successful in war brings only ready-made plans which have not been shaped by actual conditions, or which he has not produced himself, the current events will destroy his operation before it is finished. He can never make others understand plans that are not his own, and the better his subordinates are, the quicker they will recognize his incompetence and the less they will trust him." ² Clausewitz, in this brief text, clearly points out the need for commanders to involve themselves in plans before any operation can succeed. If one rigidly adheres to a plan which he does not understand or that has formulated and issued with no command involvement, he cannot really be expected to accomplish his mission.

Once intent is understood it allows flexibility to subordinates because they know what the objective of the task is. Only then if the original plan goes awry can they use their initiative and still be successful. If, on the other hand, they do not understand the plan and live by the letter of it, they will likely fail. The German Army understood this concept fully and prior to the First World War their Field Regulations directed that all officers under all conditions were to maximize initiative to greatest extent possible without fear of consequences. You cannot exercise initiative properly in any task, much less in war, unless you understand what the commander needs to have you accomplish in order for his plan to succeed.

The Army's current doctrinal manuals and circulars

recognize the need for commanders at all levels to be able to communicate exactly their intent. In FM 100-5, our cornerstone operational publication, the word intent is repeatedly used. In fact, in the introductory chapter it states, "The more fluid the battlefield, the more important and difficult it will be to identify decisive points and to focus combat power there. Under such conditions, it is imperative that the overall commander's intent be understood throughout the force. Subordinate leaders will be expected to act on their own initiative within the framework of the senior commander's intent."³ This was published in May 1986. Notice the similarity to the German regulation of 1911 which I mentioned previously. Fm 101-5-1 defines commander's intent as the commander's vision of the battlefield and what he wants to accomplish. This definition is very precise and, coupled with the FM 100-5 statement as to the need to understand intent, a very consistent framework is provided for leaders at all levels to work with.

Now, what is being done to provide commanders at all levels the proper education with regard to intent so that they can in turn educate their subordinates? How do senior commanders know when they have provided enough guidance to their subordinates? At the battalion-task force level, I think we are doing tremendously well. Units rotating through the National Training Center are thoroughly drilled on the use of initiative at the lowest level. Frequently they must operate without the ability to communicate electronically and

if they do not understand their battalion commander's intent or if he has not articulated it well enough, the units inevitably fail miserably and take uncalled for casualties. A command and control study done by the Combined Arms Training Activity at Ft. Leavenworth in the spring of 1986 indicates that although there are still some shortcomings, by and large the rotational units understand the need to communicate intent to the lowest level and are getting better at it. Observer controllers say that the most significant problem in command and control is how much subordinates get inside the commander's head. The best way to do this, according to the study, is with the use of very precise overlays and a complete understanding of tactical doctrine and graphic control measures. Without these ingredients present in a unit, there will be problems in understanding what the commander wants to get done. The last step in the process is the use of a backbrief by subordinate commanders to their superior so that he is confident that his people have comprehended what he has told them to do."

Although this study looks at the tactical level of war, the conclusions reached are sound ones and are probably applicable at all levels of war, the difference not being in technique but in the degree of detail.

Above the tactical level, however, I think that the system breaks down. We do not stress senior commanders to see if they understand how to convey their intent. The last war they were involved in can be characterized as one in

which over-supervision was the norm. This is the method of communicating intent that they matured under. This mentality will not allow us to survive on the modern battlefield.

At the War College the situation is currently no better. Thus far, one campaign plan has been written and commander's intent was not an item of emphasis. The "possible solution" handed out at the conclusion of the exercise was pathetic with regard to articulation of what the commander wanted done. I see a real danger here. The interest underlying the maneuvering and positioning of forces throughout the battlefield at all levels must be done to accomplish the highest level of strategy, for it is at this level that the commander envisions the objective of the war--the center of gravity.⁵ To do this well is more difficult than it may seem. The only way to become proficient at it is, as with anything else, to study and to practice.

Other than FM 100-5, the manuals are inadequate. FC 100-16-1, Theater Army, Army Group and Field Army Operations, addresses commander's intent only in passing. It says that, "campaign plan expresses the commanders ideas for application of land power, with supporting sea and air power, to satisfy the theater commander's intent". This pertains to a theater army plan. When discussing the planning for a field army it reads, "The field army commander expands the plan of the next higher echelon to accomplish the commander's intent".⁶ This is not satisfactory. It says nothing about the criticality of commander's intent nor anything about what

should be included and the degree of detail which must be expressed. This same vague guidance is found in FC 101-55, Corps and Division Command and Control. Commander's intent is addressed but there is no discussion of the essential elements that need to be covered at this echelon of command. In fact, the only place I can find any kind of detailed discussion on intent is in FM 100-5. It says, "If subordinates are to exercise initiative without endangering the overall success of the force, then they must thoroughly understand the commander's intent and the situational assumptions upon which it was based. In time, the force commander must encourage his subordinates to focus the operation on the overall mission, and give them the freedom and responsibility to develop opportunities which the force as a whole can exploit to accomplish the mission more effectively."⁷ I think that this can be interpreted to mean that intent is different at all levels of war. It becomes even clearer later on when it indicates, "Whenever possible, subordinate leaders should receive their orders face to face from the commander on the ground. Commanders should restrict the operations of their subordinates as little as necessary. Mission orders that specify what must be done without prescribing how to do it should be used."⁸ How important is that statement? I would say that it is essential if our Army is to be successful implementing air-land battle doctrine.

As NTC lessons learned indicate, battalion commanders seem to be learning their lessons very well. However, they

are learning to give intent at the tactical level in great detail so that their subordinate company commanders can anticipate their orders in whatever situation might arise. I do not believe that our manuals clarify differences in intent at the other levels of war and, even though FM 100-5 recognizes the difference, it does not articulate how it needs to be done as one progresses up the ladder of leadership.

On January 18, 1987, a prominent Army general (who desires to remain anonymous) told me without hesitation that the single most obvious problem with relating intent in today's Army is the tendency for the most senior commanders not to allow enough flexibility. We cannot continue to allow our officers to become commanders at higher levels and not know how to communicate in the proper amount of detail what they want to have accomplished.

The dilemma, then, is how to correct this educational deficiency. I think that it lies partially in the study of military history, both in a formal school environment and in unit level professional development programs.

It is commonly accepted that three generals all of whom enjoyed great success in war were Napoleon, Grant, and Ridgeway. All three commanded forces both at the strategic and operational level in different eras of technology. To illustrate how history can help with the understanding of intent, I will examine Napoleon at the Jena Campaign, Grant in the Spring-Summer Offensive of 1864, and Ridgeway, first

as the commander of 8th Army and then as Commander-in-Chief Far East. Although history is not the total answer to the problem, it could, perhaps, help to shed some light on a method to teach officers how to communicate intent to subordinates and how much detailed guidance they need to include in their instructions in order to expect mission accomplishment. Keep in mind that as I examine these campaigns that my purpose is not to give the history from beginning to end, but to set the stage and then give examples of commander's intent at the different levels of war, strategic, optional, and, in a few cases, tactical.

The first campaign that I will examine is Napoleon at Jena. (Summer-Fall 1806) The probability of war between France and Prussia increased in July of 1806 when the Prussians discovered that Napoleon desired to sign a peace treaty with England. In order to facilitate this, he offered Hanover to the British crown. As you might imagine, this bold move incensed the Prussian court in Berlin. The "war" party was currently in favor in the court and the Prussian Army immediately began to rearm. The news of Prussia's actions reached Napoleon in August of 1806 and although he still hoped still to avoid it, he also began to make preparations for war.

Even in the earliest stages of preparation we see Napoleon began to take actions that later prove to be instrumental in the formulation of his intent for fighting in Prussia. Initially, his actions are largely at the strategic

level.

As a result of the Treaty of Pressburg which was signed on Christmas Day of 1805,⁹ and brought to an end the war with Austria, Napoleon's army was spread out through many parts of southern Germany. The army was under the control of Marshal Berthier, Napoleon's chief-of-staff in time of conflict. From February 1806 until early September, he heard nothing from the Emperor other than "to man your post, and execute the orders I give you."¹⁰ The events in Prussia during the summer, however, began to cause Napoleon to look at preparing his forward deployed force for combat. He realized the need for current intelligence so that he could form some kind of initial concept. He accomplished this by ordering officers of his Statistical Bureau to visit their offices at French Embassies in Berlin and Leipzig. They were told to journey slowly and make detailed reports on the country between Bamberg and their destinations.¹¹ This information was to include troop dispositions as well as all important terrain analysis. Once he began to receive information from these envoys we see a plan start to take shape in the roughest of forms.

Marshal Berthier began to get instructions from the Emperor. On the 5th of September he got a letter which said, "Eight days after I shall have given the order it is necessary that all my armies including those at Frankfort and Passau and at Menningen shall be concentrated at Bamberg, and within the Principality of Bayreuth. Send me a march table

for each unit commenting on the roads."¹² From these instructions Berthier was able to deduce what his commander was thinking with respect to how he wanted to fight against the Prussians. He knew that the operational campaign was probably going to be fought in the vicinity of Bayreuth and also could begin his own planning knowing that. However, at this point Napoleon has still told his commanders nothing about his plan, nor is there any evidence that he has instructed his personal staff in France to begin to make preparations. Everything was done in isolation and all correspondence took the form of personal letters.

On 10 September, a new sense of urgency struck Napoleon as he learned of two events. First, the Prussians had commenced their campaign by attacking into Saxony, and secondly they had allied with the Russians.¹³ Napoleon knew that he must act quickly in order to defeat the Prussian Army before the Russians could enter into the action. He moved his headquarters to Mainz, Germany, and began to make more and more decisions. Remarkably, however, all of the correspondence is still addressed primarily to Berthier and references logistical matters and alliances with the King of Bavaria. There are still no instructions to his subordinates reference the campaign, or anything else for that matter. He is still concerning himself with preparing at the strategic level, at least in what he is communicating to others.

The first time we find him corresponding to his marshals is near the end of September. On the 29th he sent memos to

all of them. The contents of these memos dictate no orders. For example, he tells Marshal Soult only "to be prepared to move with your entire Corps to Bayreuth on the 5th, with four days rations and field equipment and probably move from there to Initially dislodging the enemy on the 7th." The critical instruction in this letter is that, "I will be at Bamberg and based upon reports which you will make to me during the 5th you will receive more detailed instructions for the 6th and 7th." He continues, "This is not an order of execution, but an instruction to advise you while waiting my orders to enter Bayreuth." Similar instructions were sent to the other corps commanders.⁴ He is beginning to articulate his plan to them but he has still not told them about the plan to defeat the enemy or how the army group will fight as a single force. At this time all they know is where the other corps are going to be located and that war with the Prussians is eminent.

On 30 September, Napoleon sent a letter to his brother Louis, the King of Holland, which lays out his plan for the defeat of the Prussian Army. It is in outline form and probably based upon map reconnaissance and sketchy intelligence. The letter is, in my opinion, strategic in nature. I say this because I think that the real intent here is to assure Louis that he is to protect France and not to worry himself with the operational campaign unless for some unforeseen reason the campaign fails and the sovereignty of France is threatened. Napoleon tells his brother, "It is my intention to concentrate all of my forces on my extreme

right, leaving all the country between the Rhine and Bamberg completely uncovered, in such a way as to have almost 200,000 men united on the battlefield. If the enemy (Which he assumes to be moving from Erfurt to the west) sends detachments into the area between Mainz and Bamberg, I shall not be bothered since my line of communications goes back to Forcheim, which is a little fortress close to Wurzburg. It is impossible to calculate the events of the future as the enemy who thinks my left is on the Rhine and my right in Bohemia, and who believes my line of operations is parallel to my front of battle may have a great interest to turn my left in which case I will be able to drive him into the Rhine." The letter continues, "12 October is the day when my operation will be unmasked. The remarks in this note are all hypotheses. My first marches will threaten the heart of the Prussian monarchy and the deployment of my forces will be so imposing and so rapid, that it is probable that the entire Prussian Army will concentrate on Magdeburg and proceed by rapid marches to the defense of the capital. (Berlin) This is all he says about the operation in Prussia. Strategically he instructs Louis, "...as long as the enemy does not cross the Elbe, I do not count on your Corps." In other words, Louis is to be in position in case of a breakthrough.¹⁵

This excerpt is important for many reasons. Perhaps most interesting, it does not go to his subordinates commanders even though it is the first indication of how Napoleon envisions the campaign unfolding. It also indicates

that the Emperor is willing to take some risk and that deception of the enemy is important to his plan.

Surely by now Napoleon had fully formulated his plan but for unknown reasons was not ready to disclose completely it to his subordinates. This fact is verified in a conversation which took place between Napoleon and Jomini at the end of September. Jomini says, "If your majesty will give me four days leave I can rejoin him at Bamberg." Napoleon replied, "And who told you I am going to Bamberg?" Jomini: "The map of Germany, Sire." Napoleon: "What, a map? There are one hundred roads besides that to Bamberg on the map." Jomini: "Yes Sire, but it is probable that Your Majesty will act against the left of the Prussians in the same way that he maneuvered via Donauwert against the right of Mack, . . . , now that can only be done via Bamberg on Gera." Napoleon: "You are right, be at Bamberg four days from now, but do not say a word about it, not even to Berthier, nobody must know I am going to Bamberg."⁶

By the 3th of October his communications to his marshals are daily but instructions still do not address the details of the fight. He talks only about massing forces and setting up logistical bases and headquarters. On the 6th of October he writes in his memoirs, "There are only three options by which we can operate against the Prussians, the first, by my left, debouching from Mainz and Wesel on Westphalia; but this would have been absurd; the second, to act in mass at the center by the road to Eisenach on Kassel or Leipzig; the

third, to throw myself in mass by my right, to turn the enemy's left and cut off the Prussians from Berlin by Initially and Gera, as I had cut off Mack from Vienna, by Donauwert, and Melas, by Marengo. It was evident that this last was not only the best but the only feasible plan." /?

Notice the strong similarity in this and the discussion with Jomini. It is obvious that Napoleon had made up his mind as to how he intended to conduct his campaign.

I can only speculate as to why with only a week before his decided upon date for the commencement of operations he was so secretive. Perhaps there was a concern for security. I think that there is a different reason. Up until this point he has been deeply involved in the strategic aspects of the campaign. His brothers in Holland and Italy have been informed as to his intent is and his key assistant for preparing the theater of operations logistically has also received ample guidance. Until all of this was accomplished, he could not think of beginning a war against the Prussians. Strategic preparation was key to his ultimate operational success. Strategically, I believe that he communicated adequate intent to all concerned individuals and at the end of the first week of October he is ready to direct his personal efforts to the operational campaign.

I think he has always had an operational intent in his mind also. He has just not been ready to communicate it. We know from previous examples that he has selected the Prussian Army as the enemy's center of gravity. He has also very

carefully positioned his forces in order to facilitate execution of the operational plan. All that is left now is to tell his commanders what he wants each of them to accomplish. Von der Goltz says that he (Napoleon) never presumed to forecast far ahead the precise course of operations after the first contact. What he did was to fix his mind on a general object for attainment, and to carry out his strategic deployment so as to place his army in the best possible position for effecting that object.¹⁸ In his preparation for this campaign he has done exactly this thus far.

Commensurate with his arrival in Bamberg, Napoleon begins to write prolifically to his marshals. In letters to all of them on 5 October he begins to explain his intentions based upon the most current intelligence he has with regard to enemy troop disposition. This is the first critical point in the operational campaign. He says to Soult, "You are the head of my right, one half day's march to your rear, the Corps of Marshal Ney, and one day's march to his rear 10,000 Bavarians, more than 50,000 in all. Marshal Bernadotte is at the head of my center, in the rear of him is Davout's Corps, the greater part of the reserve cavalry and my Guard; in all more than 70,000. He advances by Kronach, Lobenstein and Schleitz. The V Corps is at the head of my left. In its rear is the Corps of Marshal Augerau. It advances by Coburg, Grafenthal, and Saarfild. This makes more than 40,000 men. The same day you arrive at Initially, the others will be in

line with you.

I will remain constantly in the center.... in order to attack the enemy where ever he may be with double his force.

If the enemy should appear against you with less than 30,000 men (Remember he had 50,000 on the right), you may in agreement with Ney; assemble your troops and attack him, but if he is found in a position which he has occupied for some time, care will be taken to reconnoiter it and to entrench, in this case act with prudence."¹⁹ Similar letters went to all of the other marshals.

This is an excellent example of commanders's intent at the operational level of war. Notice that he gives them no real guidance as to the tactical employment of their forces. He merely tells them what he wants done and what might have to happen under certain circumstances. He also tells them what level of risk to accept, and where he will be, and he instructs them to communicate often with him. This is important in case they need him for a critical decision and also provides him needed information to continue planning the campaign. He knows that it is impossible for him to personally fight every skirmish and by positioning himself at the center of the formation he can react quickly to any situation that might arise. It is also important that the communication took the form of a personal letter. In other words, the intent comes in the superior commander's own words.

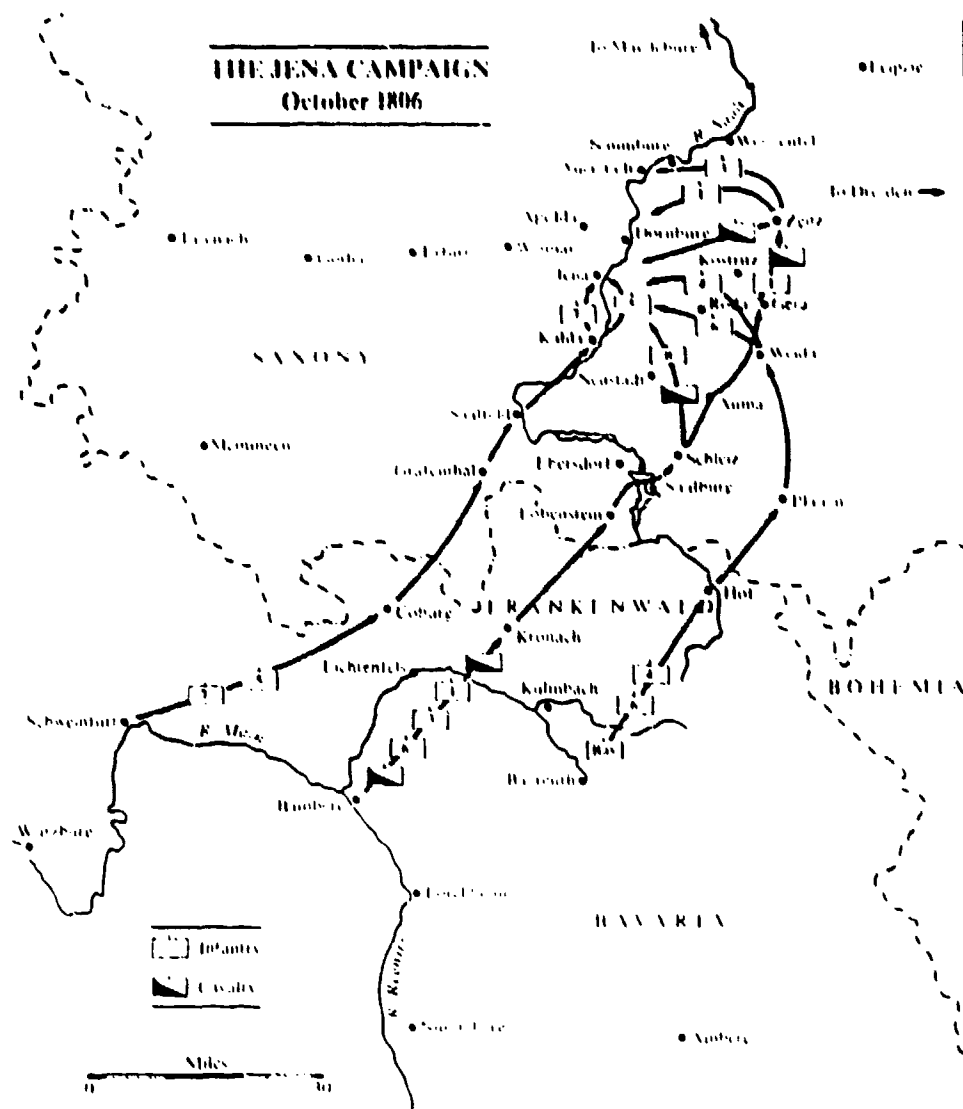
His lack of preoccupation with small tactical

engagements is clearly illustrated in a 10 October letter to Murat in which he states, "Since I no longer hear the sound of battle from Saalfeld, I presume the enemy has not defended it for long."²⁰ The small level encounter just did not interest him.

Once the Army begins to move northward, the number of written messages from Napoleon again is at a relatively low level. This was probably partially due to the physical difficulty of maintaining communications with the moving army, but partly also to Napoleon's realization that once preparations were at an end and the campaign under way, the greater uncertainty associated with operations could best be dealt with by not putting too tight a leash on the individual marshals.²¹

For example, in examining the correspondence of 10 October, it appears that Napoleon is doing a lot of guessing as to what the enemy's actions might be, but he gives no orders which do any alteration at all to his original plan. He is receiving reports of winning small battles but has still not encountered the main force which he believes to be in Gera.

It is not until the 11th of October that Napoleon gets confirmed information that the Prussian Army is not disposed as he thought. His reaction to this critical information reported to him by Soult and Murat is a great example of an operational level commander changing orders and communicating modified intent to his subordinates. He now knew that the



An operational decision by Napoleon at Jena

enemy was moving back towards Jena. He quickly issued orders to all of his Marshals ordering them to swing to the northwest. (see map) This very timely decision led to the eventual defeat of the Prussian Army at the dual battles of Jena and Auerstadt.

His orders were very short and still did not change from operational to tactical in content. He did not tell his commanders how to fight their forces. It was as if he had received some key intelligence and passed orders so that his forces could react properly to information not previously available to them. For instance, he directs to Marshal Ney, "In consequence of new information which we have just received concerning the enemy, his Majesty directs that you proceed at once to Auma and that you disregard the order dated midnight which directed you to proceed to Neustadt."²² Similar instructions went out to the other Corps commanders except Lannes. The most detailed letter he sent out went to him (Lannes) at 4AM on 12 October. Curiously enough, it did not order him to Jena, but instead was more like a reminder to his commander of all he must do in order to win. He tells Lannes, "Attack everything met, beat the enemy in detail while he is assembling and send plenty of scouts before you advance." Lannes' actual order to move on to Jena came later that day from Napoleon's Chief-of-Staff.²³ Napoleon probably felt that the main battle was going to occur at Jena and was giving Lannes as much encouragement as he could. Another indication that he felt this way is Napoleon's decision to

locate himself with the forces at Jena; a commander's desire to be at the most critical place in the battle. Also, there is an indication in this message that Lannes is probably going to get some tactical instructions from Napoleon as events progress.

By the evening of 13 October, all forces were in position for the attack. Based upon information received from Lannes at 1500 hours that he was being engaged with about 40,000 troops at Jena, his feelings were reinforced that the bulk of the Prussian force was there. He dispatched orders for LeFebvre, Soult, and Ney to march on Jena with all possible speed. Once again, we see intent at the operational level. He is still not telling subordinates how to employ, merely where to orient. The final objective, defeat of the Prussian Army, remains unchanged. Davout and Bernadotte were informed of the orders that the others received and were told to await orders. When they finally did get their instructions, they were told to move to Apolda and Dornburg respectively. These locations were on the Prussian's left flank. It is significant that these were the last orders that were relayed to these two marshals.²⁴

The night of 13 October, he gave detailed oral instructions to each of his commanders. These included the enemy order of battle and dispositions for the battle. These instructions were not intended, however, for Davout and Bernadotte. As before, the instructions were very general in nature. A general scheme of maneuver was reviewed and the

location of the reserve was covered. The subordinates got no guidance as to the tactical employment of their troops.²⁵

The battle at Jena continued throughout the day and I will not go into the details of the skirmishes except to say that Napoleon was totally involved in its conduct. He became tactically oriented and was moving division size forces around the battlefield. He ceaselessly intervened in the operations of the corps that he could see. However, where he could not see, his impact was minimum. Soult and Murat received not a single order. Nor did, and perhaps more importantly, Davout and Bernadotte.²⁶ They, at Auerstadt, and not Napoleon at Jena, found and defeated the main Prussian force. Napoleon did not even know that a battle of such magnitude was taking place.

This point is critical in understanding how well Napoleon's Marshals had comprehended his intent and were able to accomplish their assigned tasks even though they could not communicate with him. It also points out that even though he had guessed wrong as to his adversary's intentions, his subordinates were able to react to the lack of communications and carry out his concept because they understood that the center of gravity was the Prussian Army and not a piece of terrain. It is remarkable that the operation was so successful.

The Jena Campaign was brilliantly planned and executed. No one was more surprised than Napoleon himself when a messenger arrived at his headquarters informing him of the

battle at Auerstadt. Without proper communication of his intent it would never have ended the way it did. He communicated everything personally and made sure that his subordinates understood him by requiring that they write him back. He did not over control and he varied from his basic plan only when critical intelligence caused him to do so. This case is obviously an excellent example of how to communicate intent at all levels of war.

Next I will take a look at General U.S. Grant in the campaign of the Spring and Summer of 1864. In the late Winter of that same year Congress decided to restore the rank of lieutenant general and Lincoln, looking for the right commander to lead the Union Army to a quick victory in the war, appointed Grant to the position of General-in-Chief, thus making him the first three-star general in the U.S. Army since George Washington.²⁷

Grant began at once to plan his strategy to defeat the South and to comply with Lincoln's wishes and terminate hostilities as quickly as possible. After only a short period in the nation's capitol, he realized that he could not give the field army the leadership it needed by remaining in the political environment of Washington. On March 17, 1864, he issued General Orders Number 1, which stated, "I assume command of the Armies of the United States, headquartered in the field....There will be an office headquarters in Washington to which all communications will be sent, except those from the Army where headquarters are at the date of

¹⁸
address." General Halleck, his immediate predecessor, was named Chief-of-Staff and was in charge of the Washington offices. This arrangement is critical to understand as it gives a hint as to how Grant will command the campaign later on, using Halleck to relay orders to commanders in other theaters. His own headquarters was located at Culpepper, Virginia, very near the headquarters of General Meade's Army of the Potomac.

Grant realized that he did not want to get locked into a battle of attrition with the Confederates (although there are some who argue that this is exactly what ultimately happened). He knew that they were very dedicated to their cause and that they could fight outnumbered and win. Therefore, in the formulation of his strategic campaign plan, he devised a plan which would cut off the Southern Armies from their material resources. At the beginning of 1864, Lee was very dependent upon the deep south for food and munitions. As a result, Grant formulated a campaign strategy which really involved four groups of field armies and concentrated on defeating his adversary by strangling his supply lines as well as attriting his manpower. The territory covered by his plan was immense, stretching from the Missouri River to the Chesapeake Bay and north to south from Northern Virginia to Mobile.¹⁹

Technology had advanced somewhat since the era of Napoleon and Grant had at his disposal the telegraph to help with the problem of rapid dissemination of information and to

aid in the quick coordination of all operational efforts. The technological progress did not, however, cause Grant to deliver intent to his subordinates much differently than did Napoleon. Although he did use the wireless, he personally wrote the communiques whenever possible. When they were sent through Halleck, he was specific in his instructions to the Chief-of-Staff, always being very precise so that the interpretation of his orders would not be wrong.

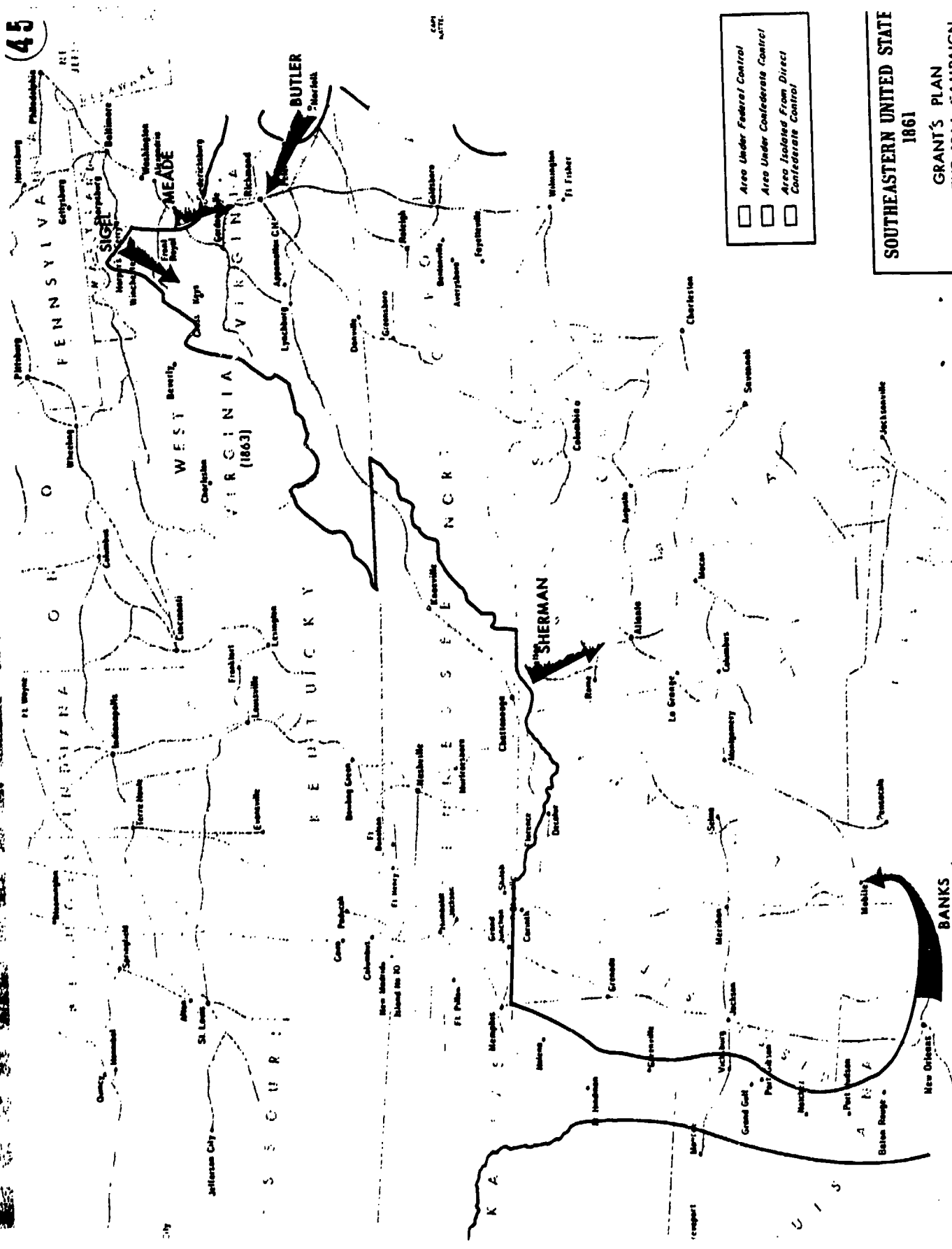
Just as I did with Napoleon, I will examine Grant's intent at all three levels of war, taking a brief look at how he relayed it, and the subsequent impact it had.

Politically, he realized the need to get the President and the War Department involved in his concept as early in the planning process as he could in order to get their blessing. He wanted to commence the campaign in the late Spring and wanted to provide his commander's as much planning time as he could. President Lincoln indicated that he had utmost confidence in Grant's ability. When Grant discussed the strategy with him soon after assuming command, he discovered that he was trusted so much that the President did not even want to know the nature of his plans. President Lincoln told Grant, "I do not pretend to know anything about the handling of troops and it was with great reluctance that he would ever interfere with the movements of army commanders." He continued, ".....he (Lincoln) realized the value of his (Grant's) minutes and that he was not going to interfere with operations. He did not want to know

my (Grant's) plans; that it was, perhaps, better that he should not know them."³⁰ This took care of securing political support for his plan.

After getting the President's indirect approval, Grant began to communicate his intent to his subordinates right away. Briefly, his concept called for the Army of the Potomac, under Meade, to fix and defeat Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. At the same time, General Sigel was to protect the Army of the Potomac's right flank and General Butler's Army of the James was to move on Lee from the south to support Meade. In the deep south, General Banks, in the Gulf region, was to attack Mobile in support of General Sherman's march out of Tennessee into Georgia. (See map) Obviously, command and control would be difficult and Grant gave his commanders a tremendous amount of flexibility. An examination of his orders to each of them results in a very good example of how a senior commander in control of several armies can give specific intent without tying his subordinates hands during the execution of the operation.

On the 4th of April 1864, Grant sent a letter to General Sherman which said, "It is my design to work all parts of the Army together, and, somewhat towards a common center."³¹ In this he is telling Sherman the desired goal of the operation, a coordinated offensive to defeat all parts of the south simultaneously. The letter continues, "You, I propose to move against Johnston's Army, to break it up and to get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can,



SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATE
1861

GRANT'S PLAN
FOR THE 1864 CAMPAIGN

inflicting all the damage you can against their war resources."³² In addition, he tells Sherman what the other armies will be trying to accomplish at the same time and how the entire plan fits together. In the same letter Grant says, "I do not propose to lay down for you a plan of campaign but simply to lay down the work it is desirable to have done and leave you free to execute it in your own way. Submit to me however, as early as you can your plans of operation." Grant closes the letter by giving him a tentative start date and warning him not to forget about supplying his army. He also relates to Sherman that he (Grant) will be with Meade.³³ I do not think Sherman could possibly need any more detail than this. He is given a specific mission, and maximum flexibility in how he is to accomplish it. Notice the similarity in the flexibility given his subordinates by Napoleon. Once again, we see an excellent example of intent articulation by a strategic level commander.

The pivotal Army in his concept is clearly the Army of the Potomac. In January 1863, President Lincoln instructed General Hooker, "I think Lee's Army, and not Richmond, is your true objective point."³⁴ The influence and generalship of Robert E. Lee was key to a victory by either side and Grant knew that in order to defeat the South he must counter Lee successfully or he would not be able to terminate the war. His feelings about this come across very clearly in his articulation of intent to Meade.

On 9 April he writes a letter to his subordinate that is similar in content in every way to that he sent to Sherman. He says, "Lee's Army will be your focal point." Meade knows right away what he has to accomplish.³⁵ The remainder of the letter is almost identical in detail to the one to Sherman except for one critical difference. It becomes obvious from his remarks that Grant is going to involve himself in the day to day operations of the Army of the Potomac. He offers to his subordinate two different alternatives for crossing the Rapidan River in relation to the location of Lee's forces. He points out the advantage of crossing above Lee by saying "if we do this he can not go north on a raid. However, the impact on your logistical system would not be good. By going south of Lee, on the other hand, Brandy Station could be used as a supply base." He concludes by saying, "I will talk with you more fully than I can write this."³⁶ Once again, we see very clear intent, the difference being the role that Grant is going to assume. Here he will be an operational commander.

Similar letters went to Butler, Sigel, and Banks. His instructions to Generals Butler and Sigel are especially interesting with regard to intent. He tells Butler, who is in reality in support of Meade's Army, "It will not be possible to unite our armies into two or three large ones, to act as so many units, owing to the absolute necessity of holding on to the territory already taken from the enemy. But, generally speaking, concentration can be practically

effected by Armies moving to the interior of the enemy's country from the territory they have to guard....Lee's Army, and, Richmond, being the greater objects towards which our attention must be directed in the next campaign it is desirable to unite all the force we can against them. The necessity for covering Washington with the Army of the Potomac and of covering your Department with your Army makes it impossible to unite these forces from the beginning of any move. Therefore, operate south of the James River, Richmond being your objective point. When you are notified to move take City Point with as much force as possible. Fortify, or rather entrench, at once and concentrate all your troops, there as rapidly as you can.....that Richmond is your objective point, and there is to be cooperation between your force and the Army of the Potomac must be your guide. All the details of the advance are left entirely to your direction....forward for my information at the earliest practicable day all orders, details and instructions you may give for the execution of the order."³⁷

A similar directive went to Sigel. The level of detail is great. For example, he tells him troops should travel as light as possible and he gives him tactical level instructions on how to use the forces of General Crook. He does, however, tell Sigel that he is in command and should give orders as he sees fit.³⁸

The intent to these commanders is clear, but notice the level of detail when compared to Sherman. They are, in

Grant's eyes, weak commanders, but he still stresses to each of them they they must command their armies and make the necessary decisions to accomplish the campaign's overall objectives. It also becomes clear, especially, in the letter to General Butler, that once the forces close on Richmond from all sides, that General Grant will become an operational level commander in all ways and become much more specific in regard to the employment of forces. It is to Grant's advantage that he realizes that he cannot do that now as a result of geography.

In preparing his commanders for the campaign, Grant has performed masterfully. He has recognized the strength and weaknesses of each and has conveyed intent commensurate with their abilities and experience at the same time allowing them maximum flexibility. Also notice that the intent has always been in his own words and in every case he has requested feedback to insure that his instructions have been understood completely.

In preparation for the campaign, Grant did not only pay attention to the land forces. He realized that the Navy would be critical to victory, especially in the case of Banks in his move on Mobile. Through General Halleck in Washington, he requested that the Secretary of the Navy please cooperate by sending two ironclads from Charleston to help in the Gulf.³⁹

Neither was logistics ignored by the Commander-in-Chief. On 7 April, he sent a telegram to BG Montgomery Meigs,

"Please make provision at Pensacola, Florida, for 5,000 cavalry for 20 days. The first day of May will be early enough for it to be there."⁴⁰ Similar logistical demands were made on his Quartermaster General for the support of the rest of the campaign.

Once the offensive begins on 4 May, we see some change in the way Grant operates. Up until now messages to his subordinates regardless of their physical location have come primarily from the pen of Grant himself. He has personally relayed his intent for defeating the Confederacy and, within their limitations, he feels that his commanders understand what he wants done.

His earlier order to Butler indicated that he wanted the entire operation to be synchronized. On 4 May, he sends a message to Halleck which says, "Tell Butler that we have crossed the Rapidan."⁴¹ He had received little information from his subordinates other than Burnside and Meade. However, he used Halleck very effectively to convey instructions to them based upon the premise that from previous instructions, they already understood his intent. For example, on 9 May, he orders, "if matters are at all favorable with Butler send him all reinforcements you can." He had previously told Butler what to do with them. Then on 10 May, he hears from Halleck, "Everything from Sherman looks well, but no general engagements yet. All dispatches received for you will be sent forward from the War Department. Please keep us advised of your position and the conditions of affairs, and we shall

probably be able to anticipate most of your wants." ⁴² This message is important with regard to how well his subordinates understood Grant's intent. It indicates that he had properly conveyed it to them and that all could make the proper decisions to carry out successfully what he desired. He uses Halleck for the remainder of the war to keep abreast of the situation throughout the Army and to convey orders as well.

With respect to Grant's communications with Meade and Burnside, the situation is somewhat different. Remember, his headquarters is near to Meade's. Burnside is an independent Corps commander who desires not to work directly for Meade because he is his senior. In reality, what we have as a result, is a sort of army group with Grant as the overall commander controlling several Corps size forces and using Meade's Headquarters to convey orders to a part of the force. At times this situation proves to be awkward.

As the forces move on the Richmond area in the vicinity of Cold Harbor there is no doubt that Grant is a pure operational commander with respect to the forces in Virginia trying to defeat Lee's Army. The specificity of his intent in orders communicated to his subordinates is at a lower level and it is clear that his role has changed.

While waiting for the campaign to commence, Grant told his staff, "I want you to discuss with me freely from time to time the details of the orders given for the conduct of a battle and learn my views as fully as possible as to what course should be pursued in all the contingencies which may

arise. I expect to send you to the critical points of the lines to keep me promptly advised of what is taking place, and in cases of great emergency, when new dispositions have to be made on the instant, or when it becomes suddenly necessary to reinforce one commander by sending to his aid troops from another, and there is not time to communicate with headquarters, I want you to explain my views to commanders to urge immediate action looking to cooperation without waiting for specific orders from me." He continued, "I will communicate instructions through Burnside and Meade; but emergencies might arise in which I myself would have to give immediate direction to the troops when actually engaged in battle."⁴³

A perfect example of what he was trying to accomplish by this took place on the morning of 7 May when he said, "...the enemy has not gained a single advantage. This will enable me to carry out my intention of moving to the left, and compelling the enemy to fight in a more open country and outside of their breastworks."⁴⁴ He is making sure that his staff understands what he wants accomplished prior to the commencement of the day's battle. He now expects them to be able to relay this intent to his subordinate commanders if the need arises. He does not, however, dictate the specifics of how it is to be done at the tactical level. He is relaying operational level intent. Again the intent is very personal and easy to understand.

Grant does not want to intervene with Meade's ability to

control his Corps commanders. On the morning of 13 May, when things were not progressing as quickly as he would like, his staff urged him to deal directly with Meade's subordinates in order to expedite his instructions. He became heated and refused to deal directly with the Corps commanders indicating that he commanded all the armies and could not give his time exclusively to the Army of the Potomac. Specifically he says, "General Meade and I are in close contact on the field; he is capable and perfectly subordinate, and by attending to details he relieves me of much unnecessary work, and gives me more time to think and to mature my general plans."⁴⁵ This further substantiates that Grant is thinking on the operational and strategic level and plans to give orders in which he reflects on the ultimate objectives and the whole picture rather than on the details of just one small skirmish.

For example, on the morning of 5 May, he sends Meade the following note using one of his aides. The instructions were, "Burnside's advance is now crossing the river. If any opportunity presents itself for pitching into a part of Lee's Army do so without giving time for disposition."⁴⁶

He treats Burnside very much the same way. On 7 May, he orders him, "In case he (Hancock) is attacked render him assistance either by an advance from your present front or leaving your line entirely and moving to the left flank to the point of attack. In the absence of further instructions, you will exercise your judgement which will be the best."⁴⁷

Both of these examples are explicit as to how an operational level commander should impart his intent. Specific detail, but not so specific that initiative is stifled.

At the same time, Grant was concerned about the strategic operation. Butler and Sheridan (Who he had pulled away from Meade at this point and sent on a raid in Lee's rear.) were clearly on his mind. As he received news of their successes from Halleck he immediately informed all of the other theater commanders so they could use this information in the carrying out of the original intent.

Thus far, I have shown how Grant relayed his intent to his subordinates on a strategic and operational level. I have also indicated that even though his instructions were more specific at the operational level, he still respected the position of authority invested in his commanders and allowed them flexibility in their plans. He did, however, always remind them of the ultimate objective and who to coordinate with.

In the Wilderness we also see Grant become involved at the tactical level and I would like to examine this briefly because his instructions are in such stark contrast to those at the other levels of war. Even if he did not want to do so, he was finally forced to preoccupy himself at this level of detail because of the numbers of casualties his force was taking, as well as the fact that the war was not coming to a quick end as the politicians desired.

My purpose here is not to dwell on whether what he did was right or not, but to examine the orders to compare them with those issued at the other levels of war and to see if as a result there is a difference in the way he conveys intent or in the detail of the instructions he gives when he is dealing with tactical issues.

On the 19th of May, near Spotsylvania he relays the following to Burnside: "After occupying the Quesenbury House, push pickets out to the Po River if you can and drive on the rebel pickets until you find the enemy."⁴⁸ Notice the specificity of detail. He is an army group commander dabbling in tactics. He should not have to tell Burnside in such detail these instructions. The intent here is tactical. On the 21st of May another order goes to Burnside. This one says, "Move as soon as possible upon receipt of this order, taking the direct Ridge Road to where it intersects the Telegraph Road, thence by the latter road to Thanberg Crossroads."⁴⁹ Once again the intent is tactical. He has given Burnside no flexibility.

At about this same time he is no more flexible in his dealings with Meade. On 22 May he sends him a dispatch which gives the following order: "March at 5AM tomorrow. At that time have each command send out Cavalry and infantry on all roads to their fronts leading south. The 3th and 6th Corps will march to the forks of the road, where one branch leads to Beaver Dam Station, the other to Jericho Bridge, then south. The 2nd Corps will move to Chesterfield Ford, the 9th

at the same time to Jericho Bridge." ⁵⁰ Contrast the level of detail and, perhaps even more importantly, the amount of flexibility he gives to his primary subordinates here with the type of instructions he was giving them earlier in the campaign. He is now prescribing very precise intent at the tactical level.

Another excellent example of his ability to communicate his intent at the tactical level and the difference between how he has done it at strategic and operational level is found in a 25 May order sent to Meade. "Direct Generals Warren and Wright to withdraw all of their teams and artillery, not in position, to the north side of the river tomorrow. Send that belonging to Wright's Corps as far on the road to Hanover Town as it can go without attracting attention to the fact. Send with it Wright's best division. Have their places filled up in the line so the enemy will not notice their withdrawal. Send the cavalry tomorrow afternoon, or as much of it as you deem necessary, to watch and seize Littlepage's Bridge and Taylor's Fork, and to remain on one side of the river or the other at these points until the infantry and artillery can pass. At dark tomorrow night, start the division which you withdraw first from Wright's Gap to make a forced march to Hanover Town taking with them no teams to impede their march. As soon as they reach Hanover Town they should get possession of all the crossings they can in that neighborhood. Make a cavalry demonstration on the enemy's left flank tomorrow afternoon

also."⁵¹ Meade has very detailed tactical guidance for the accomplishment of his mission down to the size force to use for what purpose. In my opinion, this is a very good example of tactical level intent. All of the needed information is given to Meade and there is little doubt as to what he is to accomplish.

In concluding my examination of Grant, it is obvious that there is a vast amount of difference in the level of detail required to express intent at the different levels of war. He always gave his subordinates enough information to accomplish their missions and the amount of information varied considerably with the level of war with which he was concerned at that particular point in the campaign. It is interesting to me that even though Grant lived in an age technologically advanced to that of Napoleon, whenever time permitted it, he conveyed orders face to face or in personal correspondence that he himself prepared. He demonstrates, just as Napoleon did, the absolute importance of giving clear, timely, instructions to subordinates in order to insure success on the battlefield. The essential element of this guidance is always clear intent.

I will now turn to an era of even more sophisticated technology and examine the campaign in Korea. Specifically, I will take a look at General Matthew Ridgeway as the Commander of Eighth Army and later as Commander-in-Chief Far East, the former an operational command and the latter a strategic one. Korea is an interesting case in that from a

strategic perspective our national strategy with respect to this ally changed four times during the course of the conflict. It went from one of non-intervention in early 1950 to intervention with the intention of restoring the status quo once the Northern forces invaded. After the UN forces were extremely successful, the strategy changed again, this time to one of reunification under the control of the Republic of Korea's control. Once the Chinese intervened the strategy changed again. This time the intent was directed at ceasing hostilities with a Korea divided at the thirty-eight parallel. This continually changing national strategy made planning and decision making extremely difficult for our military leaders.

He assumed command of 8th Army in December 1950, upon the death of General Walker. By this time the Chinese had intervened in the war and the UN forces were being pushed south, potentially towards another Pusan Perimeter. Ridgeway found the morale of the forces to be very low. He realized that he had to do something very quickly to turn them around or he would have an extremely tough time reversing the course of current events. It is critical to understand that General Mac Arthur had given him complete control of land forces in Korea. His instructions were "to clean house, rebuild his forces, and inflict maximum casualties on the enemy."⁵²

With this background and explicit guidance he began to formulate his plan to put the 8th Army back on the road to ultimate victory in Korea.

Upon arrival in country, he discovered that contact along the front was very light and that intelligence which could pinpoint the enemy concentrations was non-existent. As a result, he personally flew north of the assumed line of contact to find out what size enemy force was opposing him and where they were concentrated. To his amazement, he quickly realized that the retreating UN Forces had committed one of the gravest operational blunders possible. They had broken contact with the enemy. Ridgeway seized upon this gap between forces as an opportunity to reinstill offensive spirit into his forces and hopefully to improve morale as well.

He began to plan an offensive which he called Wolfhound. It was basically a combat reconnaissance mission designed to reestablish contact across the front. It turned into an offensive operation three months in duration.

Before I get into the details of the orders he issued for this operation, I want to share with you Ridgeway's philosophy on the subject of issuing orders to subordinates. "He checks each task in the plan with the man to whom he intends to assign it, then having secured in almost every instance his subordinate's whole hearted acceptance of the contemplated mission and agreement on its feasibility- only then does he issue an order."⁵² What General Ridgeway says here is nothing new. It is exactly the same philosophy used almost 150 years earlier by Napoleon and a century prior by Grant. It is the responsibility of the senior commander to

personally communicate his intent to his subordinates and to make sure that they understand exactly what he wants done. Remarkably, all of these years had passed and several wars had been fought, but it seems that the key to successfully communicating intent to subordinates remained the same. Personal interaction and backbriefs seem to be the primary common threads.

How did Ridgeway do with regard to practicing his philosophy? Returning to Operation Wolfhound will answer that question. He goes to the I Corps command post and relays the operations order to the commander, General Milburn, personally. After he returned to his own command post, assured in his own mind that Milburn has understood his instructions, he sends him a detailed message. It says, "Expect the mission to be completed by dark today or at the latest by dark tomorrow a⁵⁴ participating forces pulled back to within supporting distance of your Corps." He then reviews with him the exact forces that he is to employ and tells him not to forget to protect his right flank. The intent is very clear. Milburn is also asked to confirm by message that he understands his orders. Notice that even though the instructions are specific we do not see the tactical detail that was obvious in some of Grant's later orders. Ridgeway has given operational level instructions that are complete enough to allow Milburn maximum flexibility, but in sufficient detail that what he does will compliment actions being taken by the other forces involved

in the operation.

Another example of Ridgeway's technique is seen in the following phone call among Ridgeway and his Corps commanders on 24 January 1951. He says, "Circle these points and connect with a straight line. (ANSON-CHANG-ri-SINIANG-ni-PUNWON-ni-HANGAM-ni-YOJU) On my order (Milburn), exploit to that line in your zone. Plan tonight and submit plans to my headquarters. General Coulter (CG, IX Corps) do the same thing on that portion of the line within your zone." ⁵⁵ Once again, we see operational level intent. Ridgeway has instructed very precisely what he wants done but has not dictated how. Notice that he asks for the concept to insure that they do in fact understand his intent.

Before I look at Ridgeway as a strategic commander, I would like to examine one more example of his great ability to communicate intent at the operational level. This particular event took place on 14 February 1951, and the form was again a personal discussion between Ridgeway and one of his subordinates, this time General Almond, CG 10th Corps. A penetration had developed in that corps' sector of a width of almost twenty miles and represented the major concentration of forces facing 8th Army. He communicates the following essential points to Almond: "The shoulders of the penetration must be held, Necessary instructions will be transmitted to III ROK Corps to hold that part of the eastern shoulder which is in their zone of responsibility. Major units must remain in tact. No equipment should be abandoned.

First priority of action for X Corps is to open the road leading north to the 23 RCT. Every unit commander must be impressed with the value to the Army of the whole of every hour's delay he can inflict upon the enemy. Corps commanders have complete authority for the control of the civilian population." ⁵⁶ He continued by providing information to Almond as to the missions of the other corps. IX Corps and I Corps would attack along a given axis to the northwest to defeat the salient. He emphasized that all of the corps concerned must coordinate and cooperate fully to insure that this important operation would succeed.

On the same day he personally wrote a message to the other corps commanders delineating their specific instructions. This plan was used to initiate Operation Killer, which put the 8th Army back on the offensive and prevented another situation similar to Pusan. Ridgeway's technique did not change. His intent was explicitly relayed to all of his subordinates. What he wanted done was explained precisely and maximum tactical flexibility was left to the corps commanders. Also of consequence is the fact that both the oral order given to Almond and the written messages sent to the other subordinate commanders were personally written by General Ridgeway. There was no doubt as to the concept that he had devised for this important operation. The backbriefs and letters from the corps commanders insured him that they understood him fully and that their tactical concept fully supported his operational

plan.

In April of 1951, Ridgeway replaced MacArthur as the CINCFE. There is a distinct difference in the specificity of detail in the instructions that he gives to his subordinates. In this new position he is no longer in command of only the land forces in Korea. He has all forces in the far east to include those in the Philippines and Japan. His instructions to his subordinates become much less specific as to mission accomplishment and his personal papers indicate that he spent an enormous amount of time interfacing with American politicians, primarily from the State Department.

Soon after assuming command, he began to work on letters of instruction which were to go to the commanders of each component subordinate to him. These letters were instructions in his own words as to what he expected from that component commander in order to successfully terminate the war in Korea.

For example, his letter of 30 April 1951, to the Commanding General of Far East Air Forces, dictates the following instructions: "Your primary missions are to:

a. Conduct air operations to:

1. Maintain air superiority over Korea and the waters adjacent thereto.

2. Provide general air support for the United Nations forces in Korea, to include:

(a) Close air support of surface forces

(b) Interdiction

(c) Air transport

(d) Special missions

3. Assist in the security of the Far East Command to include ALOC's.

4. Provide air defense.

5. Provide air support as directed by CINCFE for Naval Forces Far East, GHQ Reserves, Japan Logistics Command, Ryukus Command and PHILCOM(AF)."

He continues by directing that the Air Force keep developing operational plans in accordance with CINCFE planning directives and provide their own internal security. He concludes the letter by giving the Air Force CG several rules of engagement for operations in the area. ⁵²

Even at this level, Ridgeway's intent is very clear. I do not think that the senior leadership of the Far East Air Force would have any doubt as to what his mission was after receiving this letter from Ridgeway. Notice, however, the level of detail and amount of flexibility given to the subordinate commander in order to accomplish the mission. Ridgeway does not dictate how to accomplish the task, just merely tells what has to be done and what constraints are placed on the operations. General Stratemayer is given no guidance as to how to allocate his resources, only the things he must do in order to support properly the overall campaign strategy. This is a good example of how intent at the strategic level should be expressed. Maximum freedom is given the subordinate and his own initiative is critical to

success.

A similar letter was sent to General Van Fleet, Ridgeway's replacement in 8th Army. As this is his old command, if there is any tendency towards over control, it will probably be found in this set of instructions. This proves not to be the case, however. His guidance to Van Fleet is: "Your mission is to repel aggression against so much of the territory of the Republic of Korea as you now occupy, and in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Korea, to establish and maintain order in said territory. In carrying out this mission you are authorized to conduct military operations including amphibious and airborne operations as well as ground operations north of the 38th parallel, subject to the limitations posed in b(1) below, and subject to the further limitation that under no circumstances will any of your forces of whatever strength cross the Manchurian or USSR borders of Korea or will any of your non-Korean forces ever operate in North Korean territory contiguous to those borders." Subparagraph b(1) states: "Advance of major elements of your forces beyond the general line junction of IMJIN and HAN Rivers, CHORWON-HWACHON Reservoir-TAEPO(DT6625) will be on my order only."

He concludes his letter by instructing Van Fleet, "You will maintain the offensive spirit of your Army and retain the initiative, through maximum maneuver of firepower, within the restrictions imposed by logistics and terrain and without undue sacrifice of men or equipment. You will exploit the

enemy's weakness and take advantage of every opportunity to show the world the true measure of the combat effectiveness of the forces opposing you. Continue to develop your plans IAW CINCPAC plans." ⁵⁸

The expressed intent is as it was in his LOI to the CG of the Far Eastern Air Force, clear and specific, but at the same time allowing maximum operational flexibility and initiative within the restrictions imposed. Van Fleet knows that he should be aggressive and offensive, but also within this guidance to be careful and not to take any unnecessary casualties. The exact risk guideline is clear when Ridgeway says, "direct maximum casualties and material losses on the hostile forces in Korea, consistent with the maintenance intact of all your major units and the safety of your own troops." ⁵⁹

These two letters demonstrate very clearly two things. First, the obvious differences associated with commander's intent at the operational and strategic level of war, and second, the quick but successful transition that Ridgeway has made from operational to strategic commander.

I would like to pursue very briefly his communications with Van Fleet over time. It is of consequence that they corresponded frequently. It is also important to know that at the time Ridgeway assumed command there were strong rumors of an impending cease fire. On 7 May 1951, less than one month after assuming command, Ridgeway tells Van Fleet in a letter, "I shall from time to time send you notes like this

as a vehicle for exchanging ideas on matters of major importance concerning the 8th Army, and particularly those concerning operations." He continues, "Make every effort to determine as early as possible any substantial eastward displacement of the CCF mass which could give him an increased capability for shifting his main effort along an axis further to the east. We shall do our utmost here to get such information for you, and as promptly as possible."⁶⁰

On the surface, this appears to be a very simple statement. However, in reality Ridgeway is giving new instructions to his subordinate. He senses a potential danger and wants to make sure that his land component commander is prepared to handle the situation if it should arise. He does not tell Van Fleet what to do, but he does make it very clear that he intends for the 8th Army commander to be wary of the force shift and to go ahead and make plans to counter it. These are appropriate orders at this level of command.

On 22 June 1951, another letter was written to Van Fleet in which Ridgeway tells him, "Your selection of Line Kansas as a main line of resistance in the event negotiations eventuate on the basis of the general area of the 38th parallel is approved for planning purposes." He continues, "Under the conditions visualized, it would be necessary for UN forces to be on a general line twenty miles in advance of Kansas at the inception of negotiations. This would permit our forces to withdraw 10 miles if negotiations were successful and give you an OPLR about 10 miles in front of

Kansas."⁶¹ Ridgeway's instructions show that he still requires backbriefs of his subordinates to insure that understand what he wants done and changes their plan as necessary to meet his intentions. This must be done to insure understanding regardless of the level of planning.

In addition to operational planning, he confers with Van Fleet with regard to the political situation. On 18 December 1951, he instructs Van Fleet to make no statements to anyone about withdrawal of US Forces from Korea. He does not want to make us look weak in Asia and feels that if the communists perceive that we might by chance leave then their position will be strengthened.⁶² This is not an operational matter, however, it is a good example of of the type of instructions that strategic commanders may have to issue to their subordinates in order to support the nation's political leadership. These type instructions must be as precise as operational ones and it is the duty to the strategic commander to insure that his subordinate understands them. Intent is important in this arena also.

Ridgeway knows also that he must clearly understand the intent of his superior, in this case the JCS and the National Command Authority. Upon assuming command, he felt that his instructions were ambiguous and that it was not clear as to the differences in his roles as CINCFE and commander of UN Forces. He immediately began to work on getting clear intent from his superiors so that he could relay proper instructions in support of national policy to his forces. After almost

nine months of very personal involvement in the situation he received a set of instructions in the form of a National Security Council Policy Directive approved by the President which clearly told him what actions to take under all circumstances.⁶³ The details of the instructions are not important, what is important is to realize the absolute how strongly Ridgeway felt that he needed this type of guidance in order to accomplish his mission. He needed to have it clear in his own mind as to what his superior's intent was. Clear intent is essential to success from the NCA right down to the lowest tactical level of command.

We have meandered through about a century and a half of history and I think it is probably obvious that proper expression of commander's intent is critical to success at all levels of war and, secondly, the specificity of intent must be different at all levels in order to provide lower level commanders freedom to exercise initiative.

Understanding the intent of the highest level headquarters involved in an operation is absolutely necessary if the plan is to succeed. Higher headquarters needs to keep constant check of the understanding of its main tactical purpose at the lower levels, person to person contact is clearly an absolute requirement therein. A man leading a company or battalion cannot be expected to see his small fight through the eyes of a general if no one has instructed him properly as to what that general has in mind as an ultimate objective.⁶⁴

Moltke says, "Successive acts of war are not premeditated acts; they are spontaneous, dictated by military intuition. In every individual case, the problem to discover the situation in spite of the fog of uncertainty, to evaluate correctly what is known and to estimate what is unknown; to reach a decision quickly, and thus carry it out powerfully and unhesitatingly."⁶⁵ It would be impossible to act like this on the battlefield without clearly understanding what you are trying to do in the first place. It would be very difficult for a commander to go through the process that Moltke has described without knowing his commander's intent and being allowed to use his own initiative in carrying it out.

To me, there appears to be a void in the Army today with regard to the study of how to articulate competently commander's intent above the tactical level of war. Currently our service schools are focusing on intent at the battalion task force level and below. The importance of intent is recognized even in the newest circulars which pertain to operations at the army group level. They go no further than that however. They provide no guidance as to what is included in intent at different levels. Currently, tactical level intent is being pounded into the heads of our junior leaders and if they carry the level of detail required in the expression of tactical intent with them as they become more senior, then the command and control flexibility so necessary to fight the air-land battle successfully will not

be present in our senior commanders.

How can we teach our officer corps the differences in the expression of adequate intent at the different levels of war and give them the opportunity to practice expressing intent without going to war? I would not be so naive as to say that the study of military history is the complete answer to this training shortcoming. In fact, I agree with LTC Mark Hamilton in his January 1987, Military Review article which says, "You cannot confuse the selective use of military history with the selected use of military history. If you study half a war- You will probably become half a warrior."⁶⁶ On the other hand, it would not be detrimental to study, especially at the Command and Staff College and War College levels, the techniques used by selected great captains of the past, if for no other reason than to provide an opportunity to reflect and to generate discussion about the topic. If that happens, both sides of the situation will probably be pointed out, and as a result, the students will be exposed to both good and bad examples of commander's intent.

It is impossible to put every officer in the Warrior Prep Center and let him practice commanding theater army forces, but if he ever should find himself in this situation, he should certainly be able to tell his subordinates what to do. Look back at the first example I gave, the bridgehead during Overlord. Could this situation have been averted if the commanders at all levels had known their superior's intent? I think so.

The expression of commander's intent is probably the most important part of the planning process. It is not a technique that we can afford to ignore in the process of formal military education. It is essential that on today's complex battlefield all commanders not only know the essential elements of intent, but also the differences in relaying it at the different levels of war.

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